

Significance of Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial



Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial

preserves the site where Abraham Lincoln spent 14 formative years of his life, from the ages of 7 to 21. He and his family moved to Indiana in 1816 and stayed until 1830 when they moved to Illinois. During this period, Lincoln grew physically and intellectually into a man. The people he knew here and the things he experienced had a profound influence on his life. His sense of honesty, his belief in the importance of education and learning, his respect for hard work, his compassion for his fellow man, and his moral convictions about right and wrong were all born of this place and this time. The time he spent here helped shape the man that went on to lead the country. This site is our most direct tie with that time of his life. Lincoln Boyhood preserves the place where he learned to laugh with his father, cried over the death of his mother and sister, read the books that opened his mind, and triumphed over the adversities of life on the frontier.

Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial is also significant because it represents that period within the history of the preservation movement when the creation of memorial edifices and landscapes was an important expression of the nation's respect and reverence for Abraham Lincoln. Although the effort was spearheaded by the state of Indiana and not the federal government, it was done on behalf of all American citizens. Lincoln was, and is, a significant figure in our country's history and this park preserves that formative period of his life. Such significance warranted a worthy memorial. Accordingly, a grand building was constructed which consisted of two formal memorial halls connected by a graceful cloister. It was a place where Abraham Lincoln's early life could be properly contemplated and appreciated. Surrounding it was a carefully designed formal landscape that further reflected respect for the President's boyhood home and the land that contained his mother's remains. It was considered such an important place that the services of the eminent landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., were sought to do it justice. Olmsted himself was so impressed that he agreed to personally draw up the preliminary designs. His goal was to communicate, through the landscape, admiration and appreciation for Lincoln and his mother.

For over thirty years, the State of Indiana administered and operated the memorial to Abraham Lincoln and his mother, but in 1962, in recognition of its national significance, Congress authorized the creation of Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial. That act was the climax of nearly a century of increasing interest in appropriately honoring and preserving the home and gravesite. The National Park Service assumed responsibility for maintaining and operating the park. Since that time the park has evolved from a primarily commemorative site to a place where people can come to honor the memory of the man and learn something of his life as well. A museum was added to the memorial building to help tell the story of Lincoln's youth and a film was specially produced to

teach visitors about his life in Indiana. In 1968, an 1820s era farm was re-created on the land where Thomas and Abraham Lincoln had worked. Park rangers in period clothing work the farm with historic implements in the historic manner to demonstrate frontier life so that visitors may better understand what Lincoln's early years were like. Other rangers present interpretive programs at the visitor center and at the Nancy Hanks Lincoln gravesite.

Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial is the primary site where students can learn of Abraham Lincoln's youth and has become a major educational attraction for area schools.
